



ENVISION ARLINGTON FISCAL RESOURCES TASK GROUP  
Meeting Minutes  
7:30 PM 12/17/20

On Line via Zoom

ATTENDEES: Gordon Jamieson (Co-Chair), Brian Hasbrouck, Pete Howard (Secretary),

1. Status of review of assessor's database. Jonathan has completed his study. We reviewed his results in Oct.
2. Review of discussion of new growth and related: For the examples identified by the group we determined that a substantial assessment often took place long after the permit was granted, sometimes after the property was sold. Sandy Pooler has emphasized that in these cases, the Town did eventually benefit from the new growth. Gordon pointed out that the Town may have lost substantial appreciated revenue during the interim. Was the property assessed in a timely way? Gordon was able to show (Refer to minutes of 9/17/20) that most properties were inspected externally only (76%), with only 24% having been fully inspected (inside viewing). It may be that external inspection is adequate to determine info relevant to assessments. Further, many properties (11%) had not been visited (external viewing only) for more than 5-6 years and as long as 20 years. Gordon's working conclusion is that both Inspection & Assessment are under staffed and perhaps the contracted assessments are not through. In addition to loss of revenue (new growth and building permits), there is a question of equity since substantial inside upgrades (new bathrooms, expended kitchens) may escape assessment. Question is whether additional staff in the assessor office is required to remedy this situation. Similarly given an increase of 26% in inspectional services workload and the AHS project does inspectional services need additional staff to insure proper and full inspection and application of zoning bylaws. Action items: Request contract with Patriot Properties to determine whether they have fully fulfilled their contractual obligations. Inquire what the plan is to remedy the inside inspection deficit. Inquire of Director of DIS regarding workload metrics and staffing needs.
3. Neighborhoods: Gordon presented 2 maps showing the 12 different neighborhoods into which the Town is divided for assessment purposes. One map is used by the assessors and the other was developed by the Residential Study Group. They are generally similar but the first has several neighborhoods that seem to be gerrymandered. Assessments include a consideration of increase in property value based upon recent sales within a neighborhood. We do not know how equitable this consideration is. We also do not know the rational for neighborhood boundaries. Questions: How often is the map revised, why are some neighborhoods concise and contiguous, and others are not. Are the values (\$\$\$/finished sq. ft. area) comparable within the neighborhood and are there any statistical outliers. We agreed that all of this is mysterious and a worthwhile task for the group. Action Items: Inquire of the assessor about map update timeline and contig vs. non-contig issues. Request copy of updated assessor database including neighborhood value (1-12) and perform statistical analysis by neighborhood.
4. Warrant Article Option: Gordon suggests that we consider submitting a warrant article to consider adequate staffing of Inspection and Assessment. His primary goal is to stimulate discussion at FinCom and maybe at Town Meeting. We have no estimate on either a payoff in new growth or in equity. We will decide whether to do this next month.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00.

Next mtg January 21, 2021

Meetings monthly - 3rd Thursdays 7:30 PM - Usually in the Senior Center but during the pandemic on Zoom